

SPACE / POWER / SPECIES

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UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



CAT'S CLAW (2011), MYRTLE VON DAMITZ III

GENERAL LOGISTICS

Course	ANTH 3056/5056 (cross-listed with DSGN 3056/5056 + STSC 3056/5056)
Location	VANP 113, a.k.a. the "Collaborative Classroom"
Time	Wednesdays 10.15 AM – 1.15 PM
Office	Williams Hall 607, Thursdays 11 AM - 1 PM (or by appointment)
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Cities today house more urban wildlife than in any other period over the past two centuries. As climate change, wanton development, and other forces of habitat loss drive animals toward human settlements, a moral dilemma arises: How should we live in multispecies communities? To face this quandary, this interdisciplinary course in anthropology and design will investigate the nature of space through the lens of human-animal relations. Combining seminar and studio formats, we will read scholarship on architecture and animals, undergo ethnographic fieldwork at a local building, and design animal-inclusive spaces that will be showcased in an end-of-term exhibition, *The Multispecies Metropolis*. By asking how the built environment mediates the lives we share with other animals from a global perspective, we will seek to reimagine and construct new architectural forms better suited to our shared existence on this more-than-human planet.

INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING

This course is an experiment in interdisciplinarity between the social sciences, humanities, and the design disciplines.

Each meeting of our course will be divided into an hour-and-a-half of seminar-style discussion about architecture and human-animal relations and an hour-and-a-half of studio time for your “design ethnography” projects. Through collegial dialogue and collaborative endeavor, we will learn to address contemporary ecological problems at the intersections of spatial organization, urban biodiversity, and multispecies justice. Your peers from other schools and departments at Penn will be your partners in this journey.

Over the semester, we will read and talk about scholarly literature in anthropology, history, geography, philosophy, and design theory and practice; we will conduct empirical research at a variety of fieldsites in the greater Philadelphia metropolitan area; we will analyze our findings and write about them academically; we will translate our ethnographic observations into new artifacts through speculative design; we will receive guest critiques on our design ethnography from leading thinkers and practitioners and deliver critiques to one another; and, lastly, we will curate a showcase of our work to the Penn community.

Accordingly, you will develop a broad, interrelated set of skills in anthropological thought (cross-cultural comparison and multi-modal and -scalar analysis); qualitative methodologies (participant observation, semi-structured interviewing, and material culture interpretation); ethnographic writing (contextualization, theorization, narrativization, and generalization); and design process (ideation, prototyping, and iteration), especially in terms of their more-than-human dimensions. Moreover, you will develop skills in both oral and written communication.

This hybrid seminar-studio will explore how the anthropology *of* design can inform, impact, and improve the design of cities in the Anthropocene. By tying critical thinking to what we can call “critical imagination,” or cultural inquiry to imaginative worlding, we will learn not only to deconstruct anthropocentric ideologies and materialities of space but also to reconstruct them to better co-exist with urban wildlife. At the end of the term, you will have produced your own social theories of the built environment, prior to *and* through design. My goal is that you leave with a hopeful outlook on your ability to intervene into the structures of power that we inhabit.

My role in this course is to guide you through exercises in reading, fieldwork, writing, design, critique, and exhibition. As an experiment (theoretically, pedagogically, and methodologically) in the exchange of ideas and techniques among disciplines, I ask that you come interested and, above all, willing to listen to others. I also ask that you tell me when something is not working. It will be my responsibility to respond and adapt. As such, the policies and agendas outlined by this syllabus might evolve in turn. I will make sure to keep you apprised of these evolutions in a timely manner. In the spirit of collaboration, we will dedicate a significant part of our first class to co-designing our reading list for the semester. I will solicit your input on the selection of text and topic we will cover. I look forward to thinking about animals and architecture with you all!!!

GRADE ASSESSMENT

Reading (20) | **Fieldwork** (20) | **Writing** (20) | **Design** (20) | **Critique** (10) | **Exhibition** (10)

Reading

We will read a range of scholarly texts in this course, about 50-100 pages/week. Please come to each session with copies of the readings, read. I encourage you to annotate your copies with queries, questions, quandaries, and quibbles that will push our discussion into novel directions. Twice during the semester, as the schedule below indicates, you will be required to post three such annotations on the Canvas site's Perusal function. These are due 12 AM EST before we meet.

I will take participation, particularly during the seminar half of our meeting but also in the studio, as a proxy of your reading. I do not expect you to comprehend everything that you read (that's what seminar is for!), but I do want you to be attentive, engaged, and curious during our conversation. The quality of our class learning depends on everyone's unique insights. There are a few ways to do this, from speaking aloud to doodling concepts. I realize that we all process materials differently, so I want to stress that uses of the online discussion board, and visits to my office, also constitute valid contributions. Blatant inattention, like sending emails or online shopping, will detract from your grade.

As you read, heed the argument itself as well as the writing style. By reading scholarship, we are already learning how to think and write like social scientists.

In addition to scholarly texts, we will also read fiction, watch videos, listen to recordings, inspect ethnographic objects and archaeological relics, and analyze images of art and architecture. Our in-class activities might include small group discussions, think-pair-share's, and line-by-line dissections of difficult passages. Occasionally, I will lecture to provide historical, cultural, or intellectual context.

Fieldwork

You will conduct a multispecies design ethnography during the first half of the semester. After brainstorming project ideas, you will share with me a statement (250 words) that identifies your site and its possible architectural significance for human-animal relations that you would like to investigate. I expect that you will visit this site outside of class a total of four times, for roughly an hour each time, and take fieldnotes of your observations. During our studios, we will work on the findings you have made and begin to articulate social theories of space together as a group. You will turn in three brief responses (250 words)—described later, in more detail—that will help push you to apply and interrogate course concepts as guides to understanding your site. These will be due by 12.00 AM EST before our meetings.

Writing

You will write two essays that follow academic norms of structure, argument,

style, voice, and reference. Each will comprise a tenth of your grade. The papers will help you move from data collection and analysis to the generation of theory about animals in the built environments you researched. In this course, as I have often found in my own intellectual practice, writing and theory go hand-in-hand.

Paper One should draw on 3-5 course readings to begin theorizing your fieldsite observations. It should be written in the style of a "dispatch" and quickly identify your site, its context, and the implications of your findings in 4-6 pages from the basis of an ethnographic "vignette."

Paper Two should draw on 3-5 course readings *and* 1-2 interviews that you will have undertaken at this point. It should abstract from your site to identify some consistent design principle that animates human-animal relations, in 4-6 pages.

I am happy to read and comment on paper ideas and drafts during office hours.

Each paper is due by 10.15 AM EST, online, on the deadline day. You will get your grades and my commentary on your papers one week after you hand them over to me. You will then have the opportunity to re-write one of these papers. Your revisions will be due one week after, also by 10.15 AM EST. The new grades will replace the old ones. You cannot wait until Paper Two to revise Paper One.

Formatting is open, as long as it is professional and consistent.

Meeting

During week seven, I will hold one-on-one meetings with everyone to discuss your progress in the course. This should not take more than ten minutes each.

Project

In the second half of the semester, we will pivot from fieldwork to design. Informed by your ethnographic observations, you will re-design the sites you selected in order to make them more animal-inclusive. Your intervention ought to subvert the design principle that you identified in Paper Two. How you do this is entirely up to you, as is your medium. You may use drawings, wooden models, digital renderings, short stories, film, sound recordings, websites, or some mode of performance, to name a few possibilities. Your artifacts should demonstrate an understanding of the way your species under consideration might experience and interact with the built environment that you studied. I expect that you work on them three times after class, for roughly the same duration as your fieldwork. You will turn a short proposal (250 words) and a mock-up, draft, or demo before ultimately handing in the finished product. Your design project is due on our last day of class, by 10.15 AM EST.

Exhibition

Our ultimate objective in this course is the collective production of a gallery showcase of your design ethnography projects: *The Multispecies Metropolis*. Each participant (individual or group) will be responsible for writing object labels

that introduce the artifact and its context, communicate its significance, and reflect on how it troubles our contemporary norms of space, power, and species. Together, we will design the layout of the event as well as create overviews of the exhibition and groups of artifacts that convey a clear and impactful message about the connection between built environments and human-animal relations. I will organize and publicize a public launch to celebrate your achievement. Your labels will go through a draft stage, due at 10.15 AM EST on the penultimate day of class. The final versions will be due at 10.15 AM EST on our last session.

Critique

Each participant in this course will informally present the current state of their work six times throughout the semester. You will receive feedback from experts in the field, including myself, in addition to one another. As the recipients of this criticism—*constructive* criticism, I should emphasize, meant to help advance the conceptualization of your projects—you will be assessed on your ability to reply, in person, to questions, and to incorporate their advice into the development of your ideas. In your role as peer critics, I will assess the *generosity* of your criticism (more on that, later): an important trait as you begin to collaborate with others. This will occur in-class, during the studio half of our sessions.

In the design disciplines, critiques are a common mode of intellectual exchange. This course will draw on that genre of feedback, not only for the obvious design component, but for your ethnography and exhibit, too. These are not intended to be stressful, and you should only have to prepare a minute—or two—worth of material to show and describe.

Instruction

You will have opportunities to learn and practice each mode of thinking and doing in this course—ethnography, design, and exhibition—through in-class, skill-based workshops that precede each assignment deadline. I will also offer guides for reading theory, providing criticism, and writing papers at a later date, along with detailed grading rubrics. If you require additional instruction, please bring this to my attention, and I will work with you.

Graduate

Graduate students in this course might read additional texts, gather more data, write longer papers, cite outside sources, and/or contribute further design labor to their projects. The exact requirements will be determined on day one after an individual consultation to assess your learning objectives and research interests.

Absences

Your attendance is an integral part of our collaborative learning as a group, and each session is important, for your own sake and for the sake of everyone else. Please do not miss class unless I have approved your absence, preferably at least 24 hours in advance. If you miss class, and I have not heard from you, I will reach out to your academic advisor to check in on you. Two unexcused absences will result in a letter grade deduction. You will be required to make up any studio work due to absences, excused or not. If you are sick, stay home, and use Zoom.

Lateness

I am not opposed to granting extensions on the two papers if the request is received with 24-hours' notice, whether due to personal emergency or you simply need extra time to give it your best amidst obligations in other courses. Please bear in mind, however, that this course's pacing is *f-a-s-t*, and you will quickly fall behind if you do not turn it in shortly after the original deadline set.

I am much less inclined to grant extensions on the other assignments because they directly contribute to our studio, except due to extenuating circumstances.

Late work that does not receive extensions will be penalized a third of a letter grade per day.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

Materials

At the present time, you are not required to obtain any texts on your own for this course. I will upload our readings as PDFs to the Canvas site. This policy is subject to change on the first day of class as we determine what to read. Should outside materials be required, I will make copies available at the library, and/or I will share resources to assist with purchasing.

For students who prefer hard copies of these materials, the LGBT Center's Bohnett CyberCenter offers free printing. You can bring your own paper, but there is often recycled paper brought in by faculty and staff. Please let me know if you require any support with printing.

Films and other media will be made available to stream or download.

There will be a modest fund for the purchase of project materials that will be subject to my approval. Please contact me with requests as soon as is possible.

Inclusivity

A liberal education depends on the exchange of diverse perspectives. I seek to safeguard this diversity through an inclusive classroom that values the identities we all bring to Penn. I ask, for instance, that you use pronouns that acknowledge the gender identity of your peers. I use he/him/his pronouns which I listed above on the syllabus. At the first meeting, I will ask you all to share your preferences. If I err, please notify me in whatever way you feel comfortable doing (e.g. email).

My approach to inclusivity is a work-in-progress. Please tell me other ways that I can support you during this semester.

I want everyone to feel safe in my classroom. Racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and religious discrimination will not be tolerated.

Content

Readings and other materials in this course will depict violence against animals, sometimes graphically. These materials will also depict violence, physical and/or structural, caused by racism, sexism, and other axes of social discrimination that are tied to animals. This content may be difficult for some and elicit feelings and emotions that we, as a group, ought to respect. I will attempt to moderate frank discussion of pressing contemporary issues while acknowledging the challenges, on a personal level, that this may bring. At the very least, I will offer warnings, so you can determine your level of engagement. If you have additional suggestions about how to approach these subjects, please get in touch. I ask that everyone is respectful of their peers' boundaries.

Accessibility

The University of Pennsylvania provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified and received approval from Disability Services. You may contact Disability Services and make appointments to discuss and/or request accommodations by calling 267.788.0030.

While not all requests outside this official channel may be possible, I will do my best as your instructor to offer a classroom that is welcoming to all styles of learning. Please contact me if you are experiencing any difficulties processing the material due to the sensory environment (e.g., lighting, sound, etc.) or my manner of presentation.

A map with directions to our classroom and accessible entrances to the library may be found here: <https://www.library.upenn.edu/floor-plans/vanpelt/first>. Do let me know if you encounter any problems.

Integrity

Navigating questions of academic integrity can be tricky in a course that values collaboration. To clarify, I expect you to do your own reading, fieldwork, design, and writing (papers, assignments, & labels). You are allowed, encouraged, even, to discuss your ideas with your peers. That said, you should be intentional about expressing your distinct opinion in your work—i.e., *your* work should reflect *your* input, primarily—and each paper should be different, beyond reasonable doubt.

If you have concerns, please speak with me. When in doubt, cite! Cite authors. Acknowledge your classmates (in a footnote, perhaps).

Outright plagiarism—obvious paraphrasing without attribution, or unquoted quotations—will not be tolerated, and I reserve the right to escalate it to Penn's Center for Community Standards & Accountability, and assign a failing grade.

For a description of possible violations, see the Code of Academic Integrity here: <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>

Emails

Email correspondence is meant for simple exchanges of information or requests for clarification. Longer matters of discussion should be reserved for office hours or conversations after class. I aim to respond to emails within a 24-hour window, during the weekdays, or 48-hour window, on the weekends. If you want to know about your grade, please see me in person.

COVID

Unless public health guidance dramatically reverses, we will meet in-person for the duration of this course. The current masking policy at Penn stipulates that it is up to instructors to decide. On the first day of class, we will determine how we want to proceed. Whatever we decide, I request that you abide by it and respect your classmates' choices without making assumptions. This policy might change in accordance with university dictates. If you have concerns, please speak to me, and we can revisit this topic.

READING SCHEDULE

unit zero: an "object lesson" in "human-centered design"

ONE. bird spikes, sorting the sordid (January 18)

Gordan Savicic and Selena Savic (2012) "Unpleasant for Pigeons"

STUDIO: Design Ethnography

Before: Nothing

After: Brainstorm project

unit one: theoretical foundations

TWO. humans and/as animals (January 25)

Donna Haraway (2007)

When Species Meet (Chapter One)

Eben Kirksey + Stefan Helmreich (2010)

"The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography"

Clapperton Chakanetsa Mavhunga (2011)

"Vermin Being"

Anna Tsing (2013)

"More-than-Human Sociality"

STUDIO: Figures + Contact Zones

Before: 3 O's

After: Reach consensus

THREE. bestial spaces (February 1)

Jennifer Wolch et al. (1995)

"Transspecies Urban Theory"

Maan Barua (2021)

"Feral Ecologies"

STUDIO: Ethnography Workshop @ Spruce Hill Bird Sanctuary

Before: Site selection

After: Fieldwork I

unit two: ethnographic cases

FOUR. the city (February 8)

Bettina Stoetzer (2020)

"Urban Vulnerabilities"

Peter Alagona (2022)

The Accidental Ecosystem (selections)

STUDIO: Fieldnotes + Interviews

Before: Reflection A

After: Fieldwork II

FIVE. the home (February 15)

RELOCATION: Penn Museum (Classroom L1)

Yi-Fu Tuan (1984)

"Cruelty and Affection"

Harriet Ritvo (2004)

"Animal Planet"

David G. Anderson et al. (2017)

"Architectures of Domestication"

STUDIO: Material Culture

Before: Reflection B

After: Nothing

SIX. the farm (February 22)

Dawn Coppin (2008)

"Crate and Mangle"

Alex Blanchette (2015)

"Herding Species"

STUDIO: Ethnographic Critique (Dr. Stefan Helmreich)

Before: Slides

After: Fieldwork III

SEVEN. in-"fur"-structures (March 1)

HNTB + Van Valkenburg (2013)

"ARC Wildlife Crossing Competition" (2013)

Gary Kroll (2018)

"Snarge"

Thomas White (2023)

"Road Ecology"

Kate Orff (2014)

"Oyster-tecture"

Stephanie Wakefield + Bruce Braun (2019) "Oyster-tecture"

STUDIO: Ethnographic Critique (Dr. Claire Zimmerman)

Before: Paper 1 + Slides

After: Fieldwork IV + 1-on-1 meeting

CAESURA. spring break (March 8)

unit three: design possibilities

EIGHT. nonhuman phenomenologies (March 15)

Jakob von Uexküll (1934)	<i>A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans</i>
Eva Hayward (2010)	"Fingeryeyes"
OPTIONAL: Eduardo Kohn (2006)	"How Dogs Dream"

STUDIO: Animal Sensing (Dr. Gabe Miller)

Before: Revision (if applicable) + Reflection C

After: Nothing

NINE. posthuman design (March 22)

Edward Dodington (2012)	"Mess-Mate Co-Designers"
Joyce Hwang (2017)	"Toward an Architecture for Urban Wildlife Advocacy"
Ariane Lourie Harrison (2022)	"The Sixth Mass Extinction"
OPTIONAL: Laura Forlano (2016)	"Posthumanism and Design"

STUDIO: Design Workshop (Ned Dodington)

Before: Paper 2

After: Design I

TEN. modes of speculation (March 29)

Yen-Ling Tsai et al. (2016)	"Golden Snail Opera"
OPTIONAL: Jeff Vandermeer (2017)	<i>Strange Bird</i>
OPTIONAL: Vilem Flusser (1987)	<i>Vampyroteuthis Infernalis</i>

STUDIO: Design Critique (Cathryn Dwyre)

Before: Proposal + Slides

After: Design II

ELEVEN. more-than-human flourishing (April 5)

Jia Hui Lee (2022)

“Rodent Trapping and the Just Possible”

STUDIO: Design Critique (Joyce Hwang)

Before: Slides + Revision (if applicable)

After: Design III

TWELVE. politics of exhibition (April 12)

John Berger (1980)

“Why Look at Animals?”

STUDIO: Curation Workshop (Dr. Aaron Levy)

Before: Mock-up

After: Plan exhibition

THIRTEEN. exhibitionary critique (April 19)

Terike Haapoja (2023)

“Museum of Nonhumanity”

STUDIO: Curation Critique (Dr. Grace Kim)

Before: Label drafts

After: Finish writing

FOURTEEN. *Multispecies Metropolis* (April 26)

Richard Fadok (n.d.)

"Syntopia"

STUDIO: Exhibition Assembly

Before: Final project

After: Attend event

EVENT. *Multispecies Metropolis* (May 4)

RELOCATION: Dean's Alley (Meyerson Hall), 4-7 PM